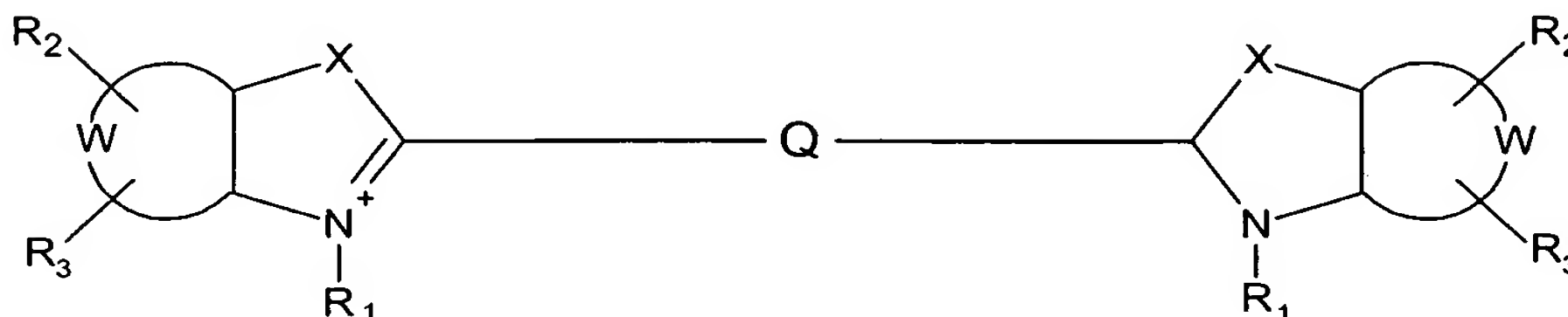


In the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A symmetric cyanine of the formula:



(1)

wherein:

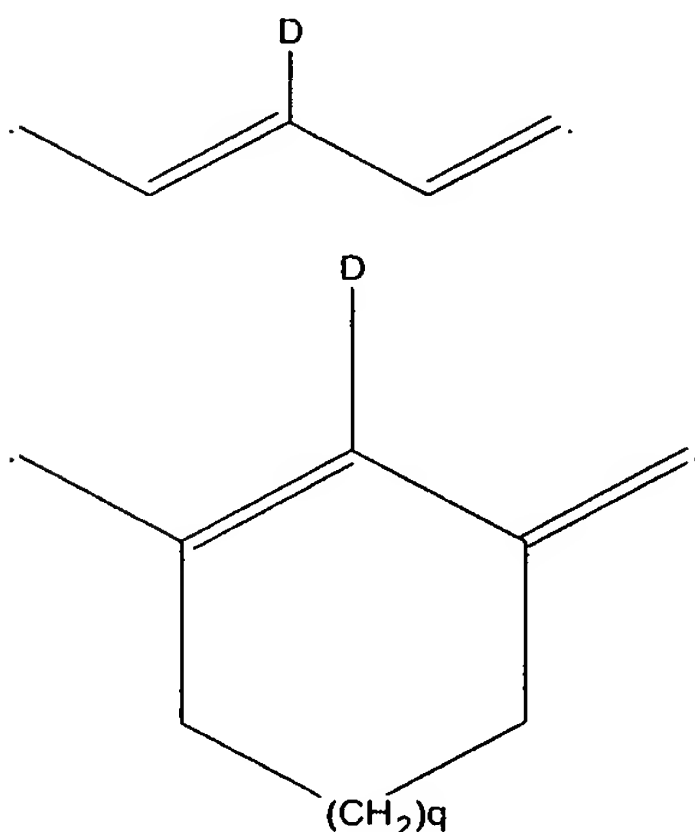
X is selected from the group consisting of O, S and C(CH₃)₂;

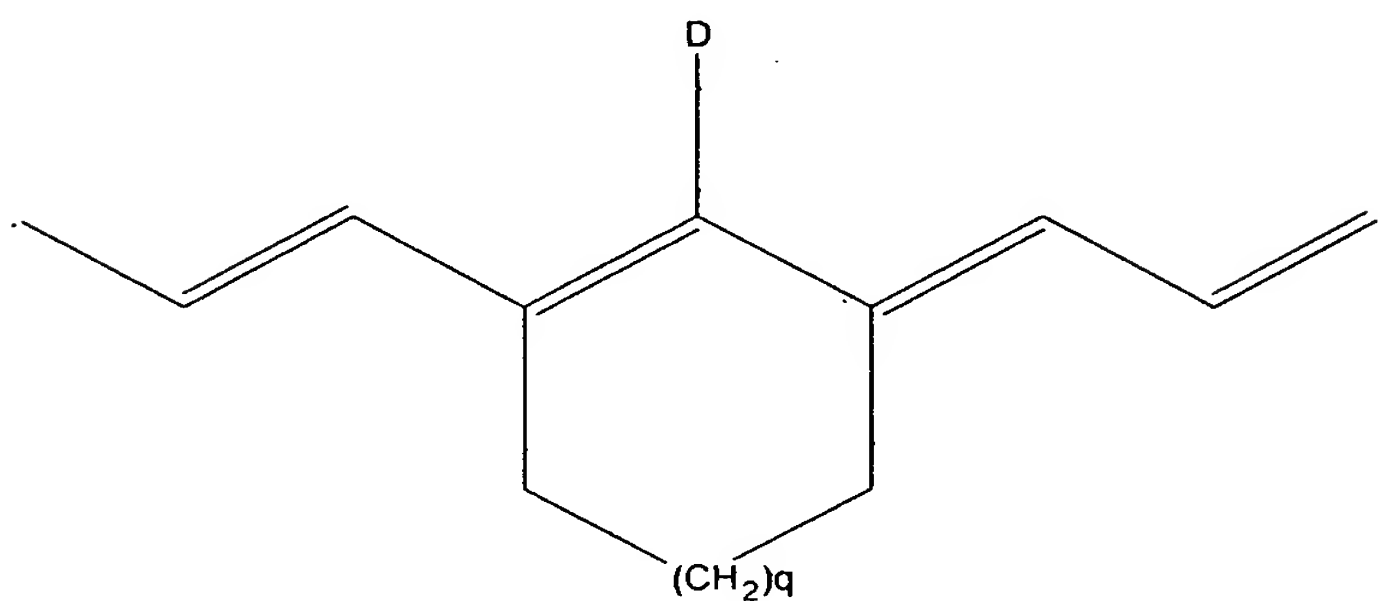
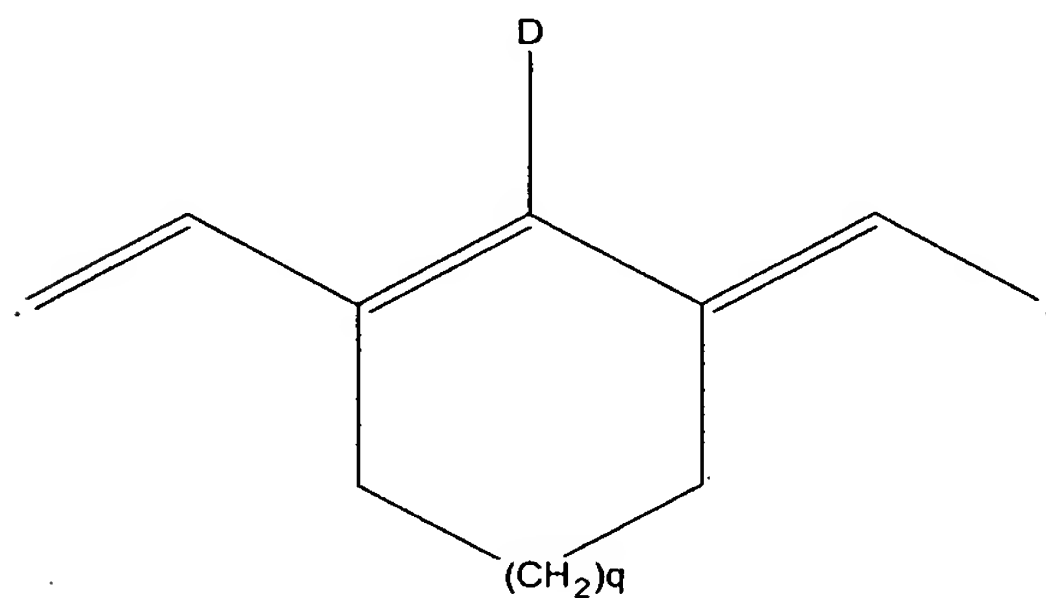
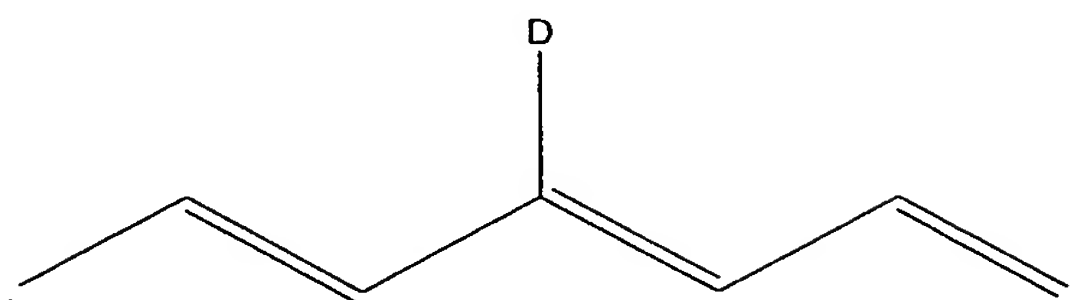
W represents non-metal atoms required to form a benzo-condensed or a naphtho-condensed ring;

R₁ is selected from the group consisting of (CH₂)_nCH₃, (CH₂)_nSO₃⁻ and (CH₂)_nSO₃H, wherein n is an integer selected from 0 to 6 when R₁ is (CH₂)_nCH₃, and n is an integer selected from 3 to 6 when R₁ is (CH₂)_nSO₃⁻ or (CH₂)_nSO₃H;

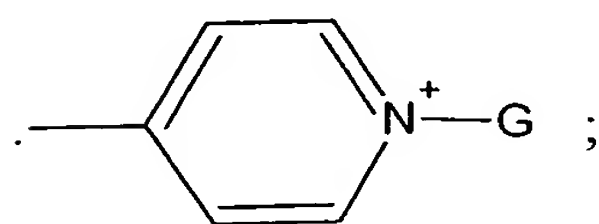
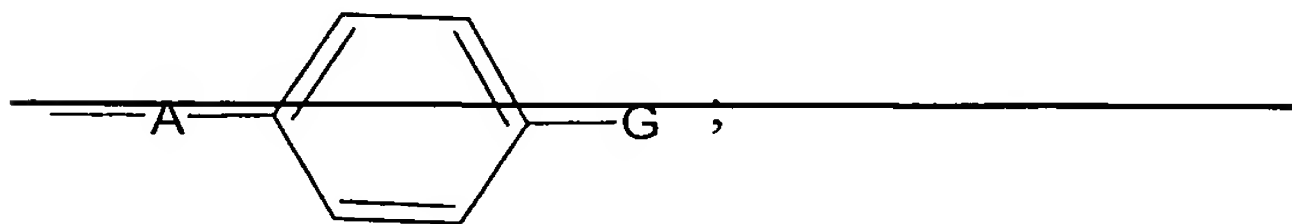
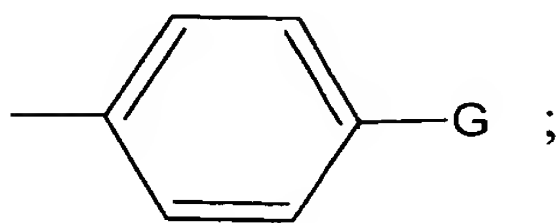
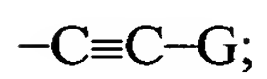
R₂ and R₃ are independently selected from the group consisting of H, a sulphonic moiety and a sulphonate moiety;

Q is selected from the group consisting of:





wherein q is 0 or 1 and D is selected from the group consisting of:



wherein ~~A is O or S~~;

G is a nucleophile moiety selected from the group consisting of $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{NH}_2$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{SH}$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{Y}(\text{CH}_2)_p\text{OH}$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{Y}(\text{CH}_2)_p\text{NH}_2$ and $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{Y}(\text{CH}_2)_p\text{SH}$, wherein Y is selected from the group consisting of -NH-, -CONH-, -O- and -S-, m is an integer selected from 0 to 6 and p is an integer selected from 1 to 6;

or wherein G is a moiety capable of reacting with N, O or S nucleophiles, and is selected from the group consisting of $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{COOH}$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{glycidyl}$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{maleimide}$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{CO-NHS}$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{CO-imidazole}$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{SO}_2\text{CH=CH}_2$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{CONHNH}_2$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{CHO}$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{Y}(\text{CH}_2)_p\text{COOH}$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{Y}(\text{CH}_2)_p\text{glycidyl}$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{Y}(\text{CH}_2)_p\text{maleimide}$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{Y}(\text{CH}_2)_p\text{CO-NHS}$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{Y}(\text{CH}_2)_p\text{CO-imidazole}$, $\text{CH}_2(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{O-PAM}$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{Y}(\text{CH}_2)_p\text{SO}_2\text{CH=CH}_2$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{Y}(\text{CH}_2)_p\text{CONHNH}_2$, $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{Y}(\text{CH}_2)_p\text{CHO}$ and $(\text{CH}_2)_m\text{Y}(\text{CH}_2)_p\text{O-PAM}$, wherein Y, m and p have the meanings indicated above.

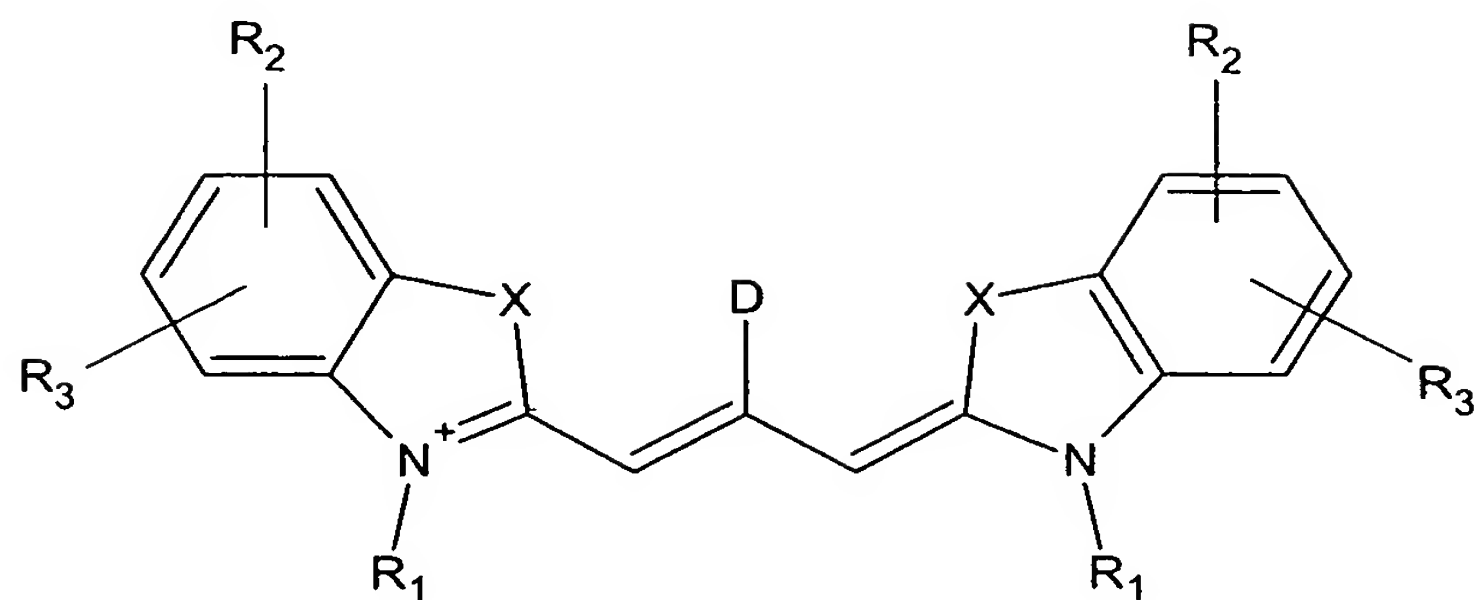
2. (Original) A symmetric cyanine according to claim 1, wherein at least one of the moieties R_1 to R_3 is, or contains a sulphonic moiety or a sulphonate moiety.

3. – 4. (Cancelled)

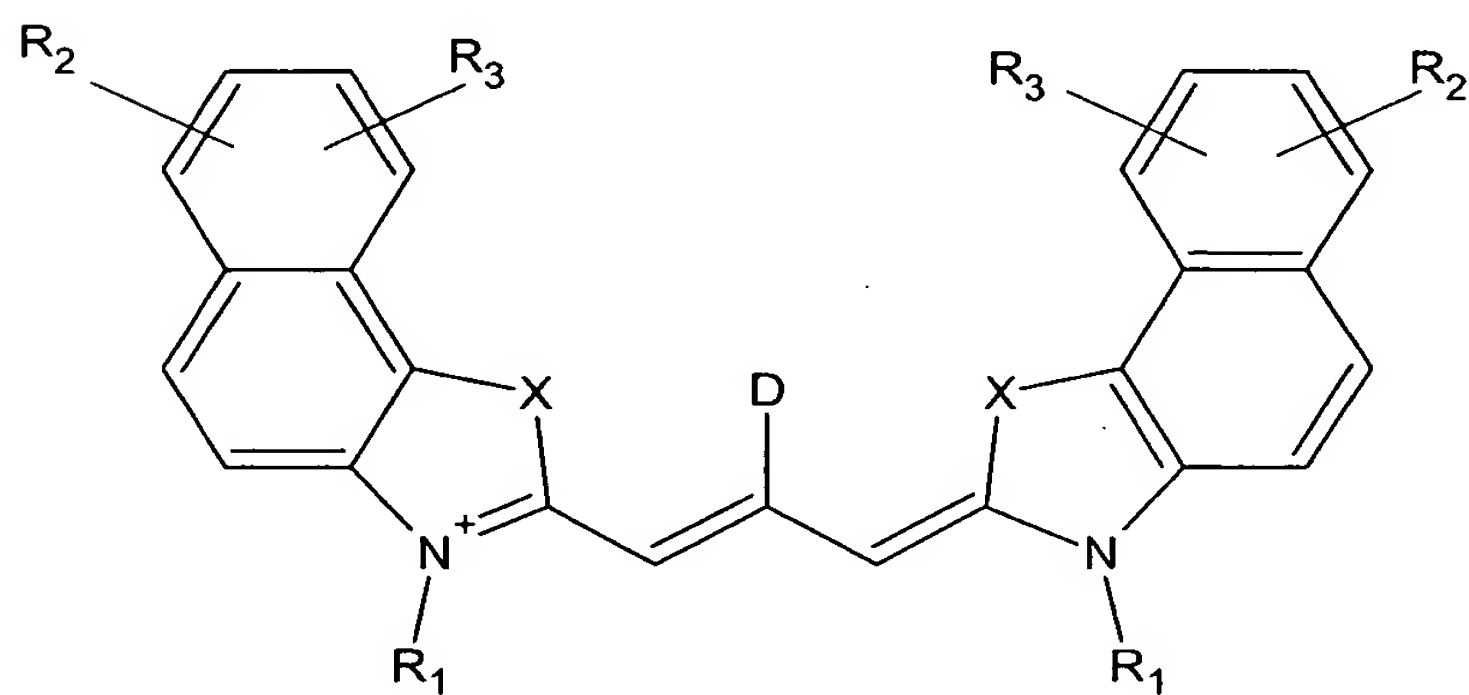
5. (Original) A symmetric cyanine according to claim 4, wherein R_1 is $(\text{CH}_2)_n\text{SO}_3^-$ or $(\text{CH}_2)_n\text{SO}_3\text{H}$.

6. (Cancelled)

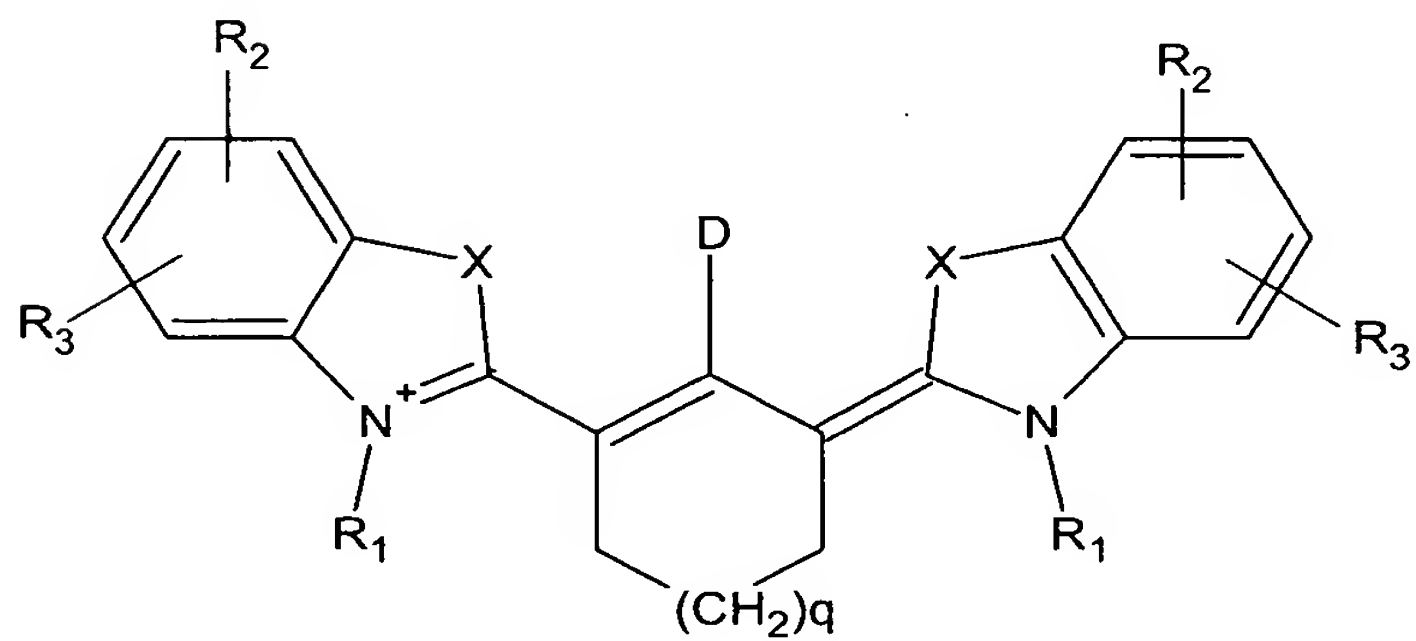
7. (Original) A symmetric cyanine according to claim 1 having any of the formulae 2a to 2l:



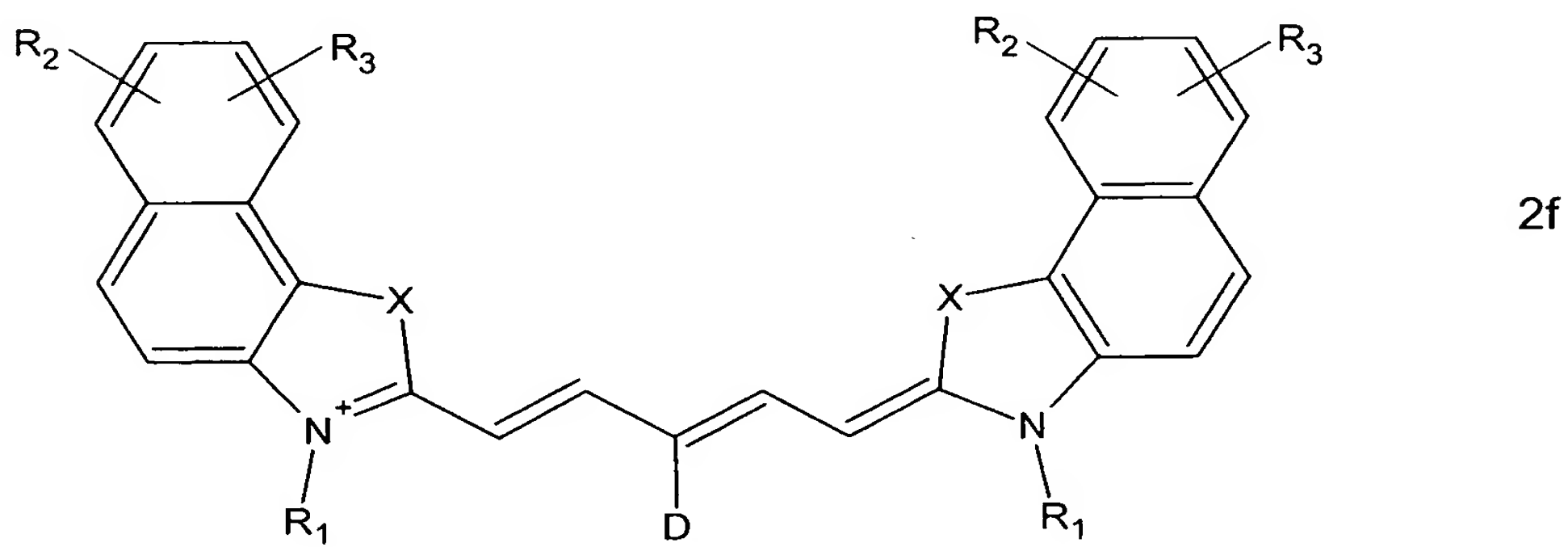
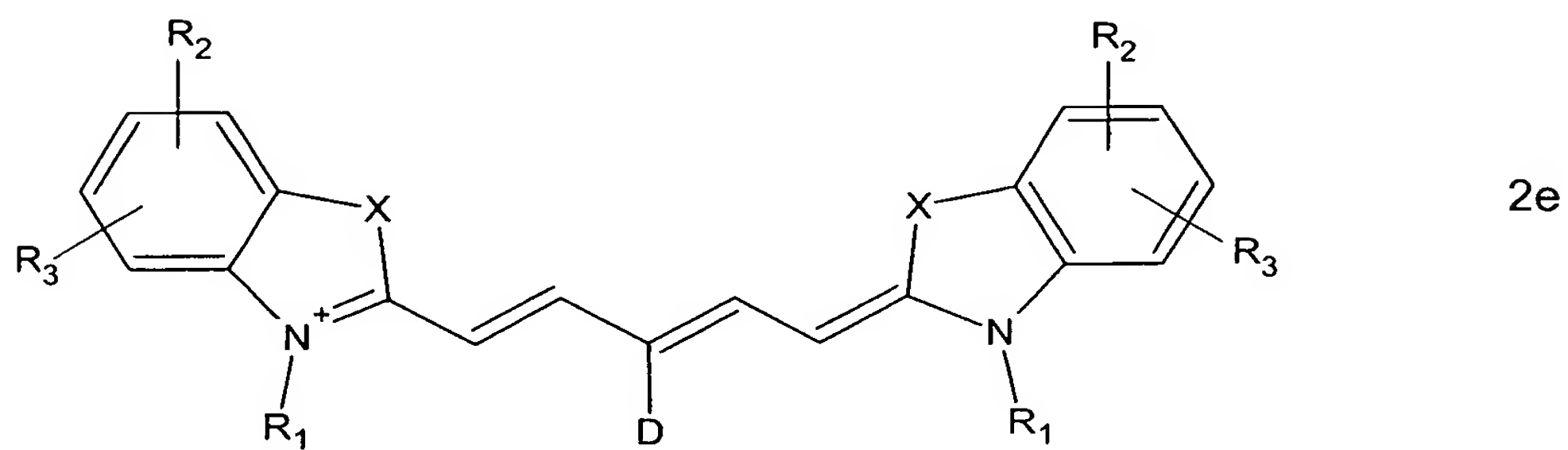
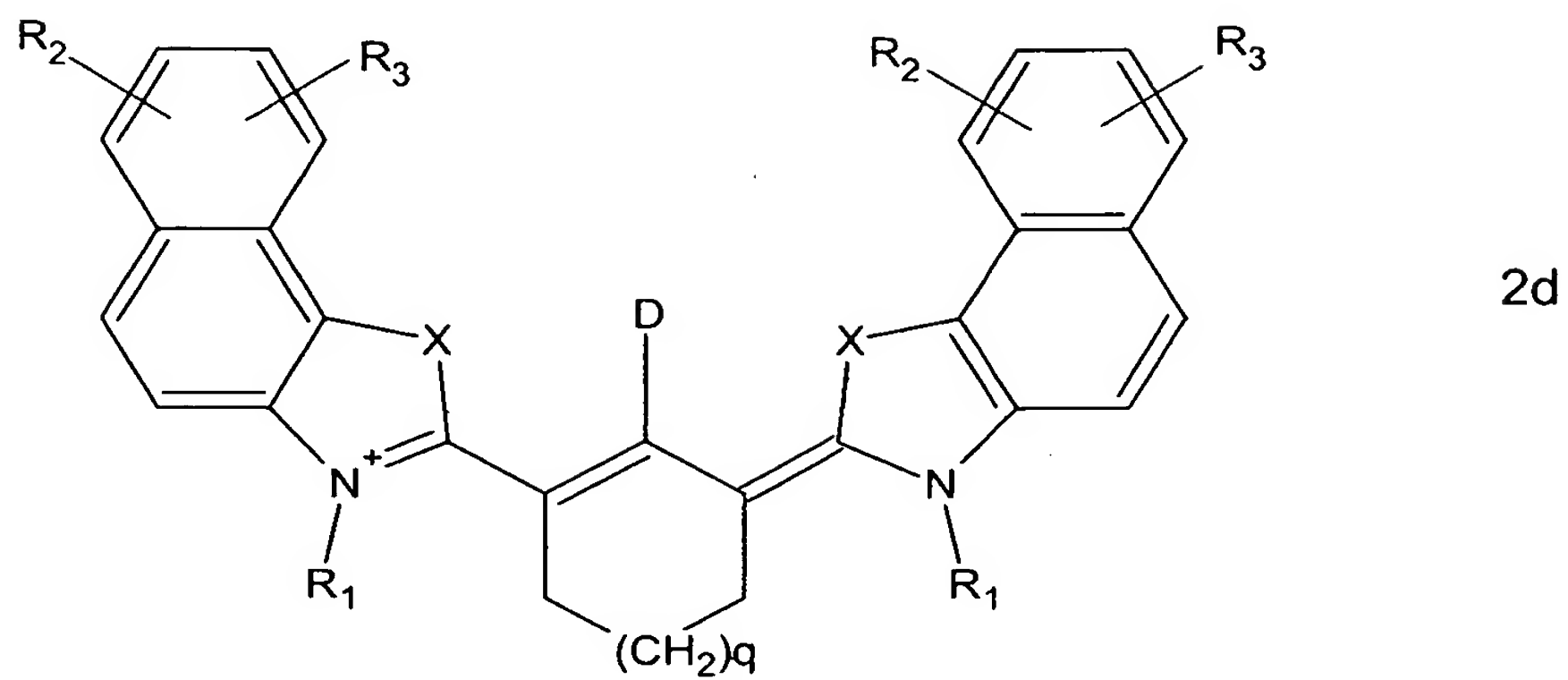
2a

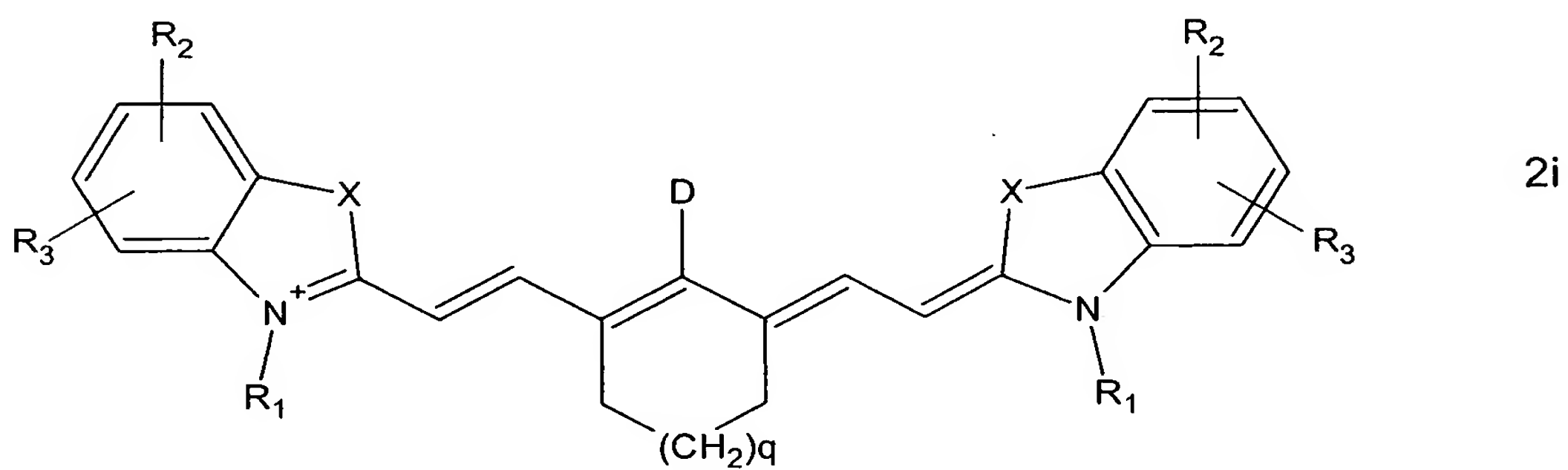
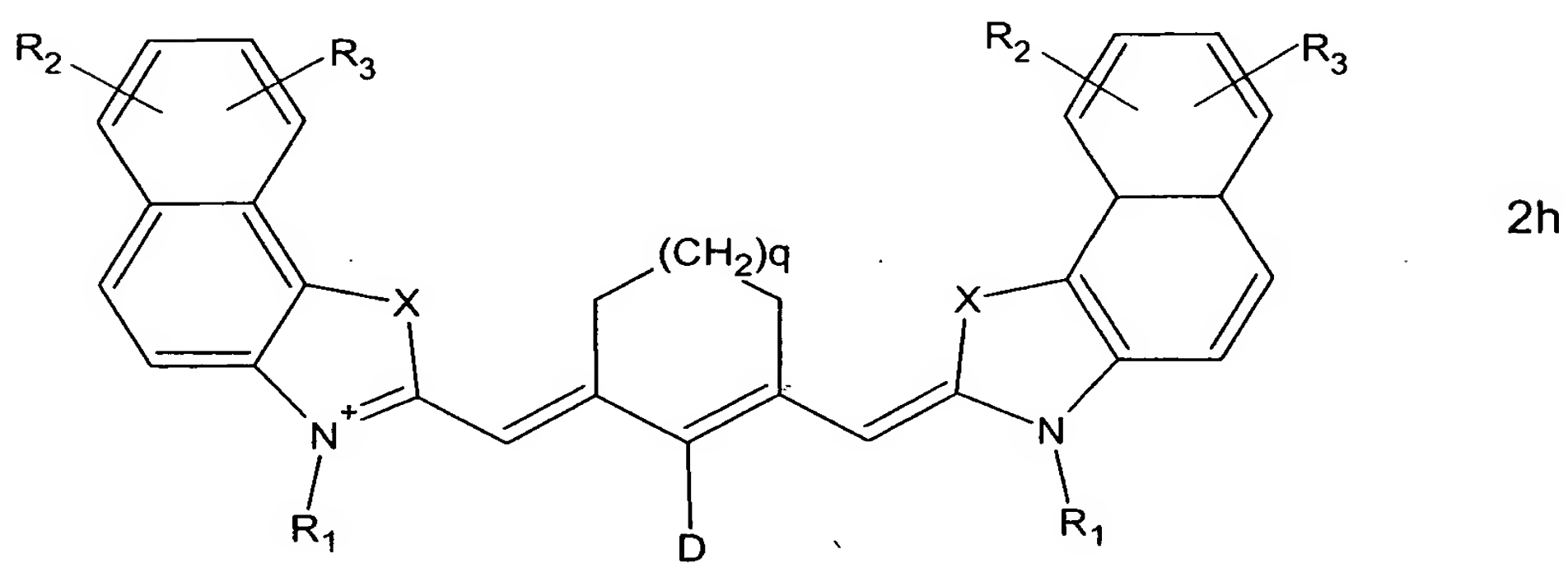
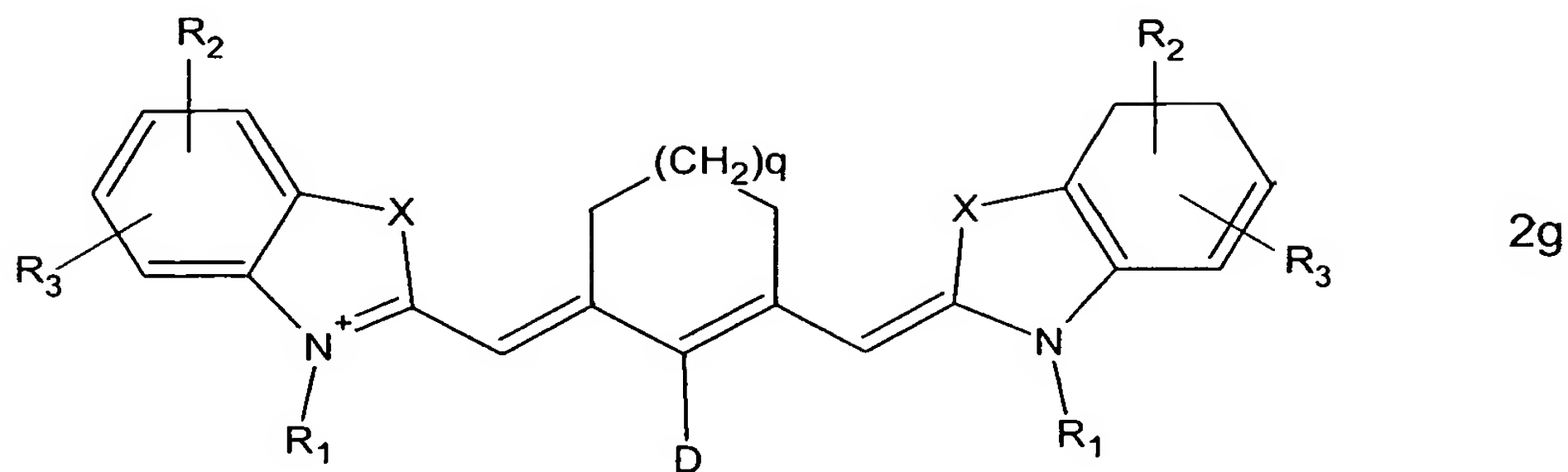


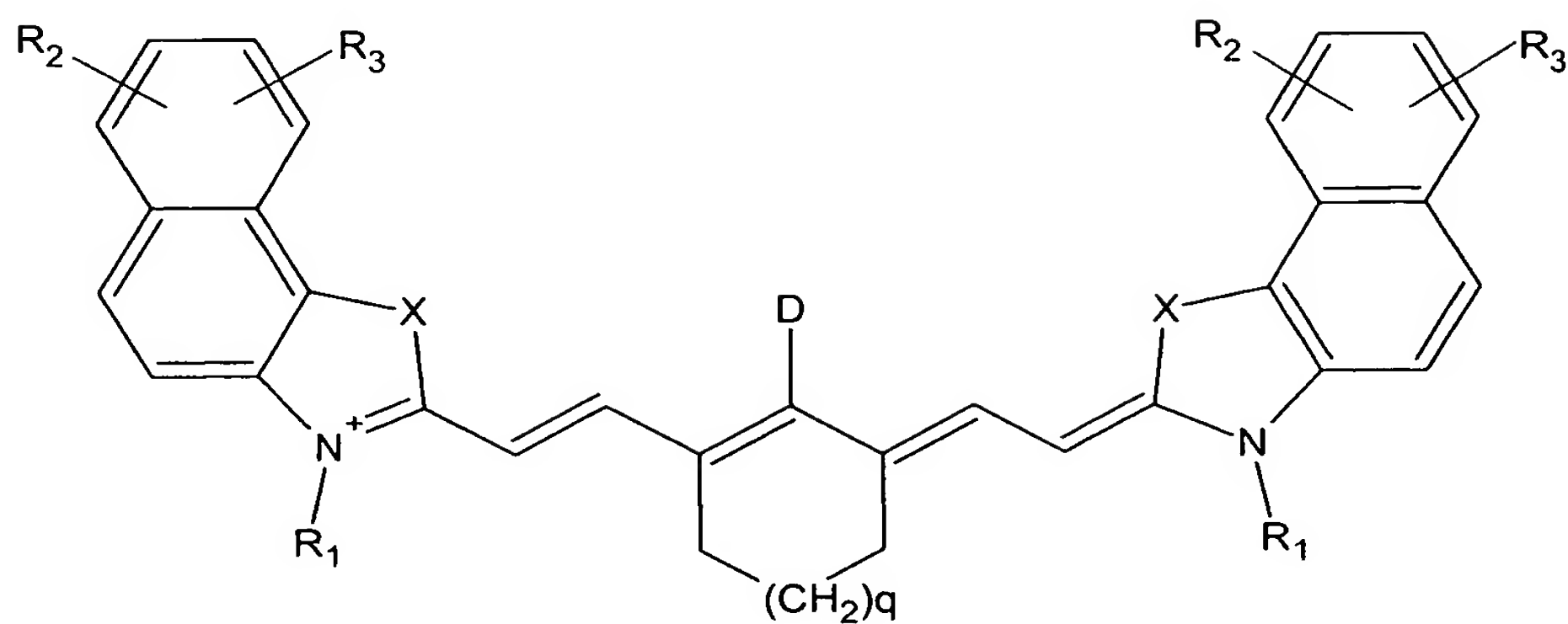
2b



2c







21

wherein R₁, R₂, R₃, X, q and D have the meanings indicated in claim 1.